

An Interview with MABLE LEONARD CLATWORTHY
October 20, 1960

and

A Museum Talk on the CLATWORTHY FAMILY
August 20, 1981

Mable Leonard Clatworthy was interviewed on October 20, 1960, in the Clatworthy home in Estes Park. Fred Clatworthy, Jr., conducted the interview.

On August 20, 1981, Barbara Clatworthy Gish and Fred Clatworthy, Jr., presented a Museum Talk on the Clatworthy family at the Estes Park Municipal Building. Ruth Stauffer was the program chairman for the Estes Park Area Historical Museum.

The tapes are on file at the Estes Park Public Library and may be checked out. The reader should keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

The Estes Park oral history project is jointly sponsored by the Estes Park Area Historical Museum and the Estes Park Public Library.

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Interview with Mable Leonard Clatworthy (MC)
Interviewer: Fred Clatworthy, Jr. (FC)
Date of Interview: October 20, 1960
Location: Clatworthy family home in Estes Park

FC This is Fred Clatworthy. I am speaking to you in a personal recording from high in the Colorado Rockies at Estes Park. Estes Park is a town in north-central Colorado about seventy miles northwest of Denver. Denver is a mile high in altitude. From there we have traversed mountain highways to the town of Estes Park, which is 7,522 feet above sea level. The town itself is surrounded on three sides by Rocky Mountain National Park. It is about nine o'clock on a Thursday morning, October 20, 1960.

October is the time of year often referred to by the Arapahoe Indians as Indian Summer; however, this morning as we look out our large picture window toward the Front Range, I can see clouds rolling over the high snow-covered peaks, some reaching to over 14,000 feet. Long's Peak tops them all at 14,255 feet. Although the air is crisp outside, it is warm here in the living-room of our family home. The room is comfortable with several large well-padded chairs and a large davenport. The old upright Schuman piano, which was included in many of my baby pictures, sits against the wall. Many valuable paintings, most of them by R. H. Tallant, pioneer mountain painter, hang on the walls as well as original photographs, of course, by my father. Large double doors open off the main living-room into a special area called the Cave Room; three of its walls are solid rock. In one corner is an Indian fireplace patterned after the one at the Hopi House at the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Many early day relics are displayed on the walls.

Now, to discuss with us the early days of Colorado, and especially Estes Park, is my mother, Mrs. Fred P. Clatworthy, Sr. Mother, where were you born and when?

MC Trumansburg, New York, May 18, 1885, at the home of Miss Sara B. Jeffers. As my father was a doctor and there was a scarlet fever epidemic in the town in which I was to arrive, Olden(?) Center, New York, they took Mother Leonard to Trumansburg. They opened up her house, and I came into the world at that time.

FC How old are you now?

MC I am seventy-five years old, born as I say, May 18, 1885.

FC When did you first come to Colorado?

MC I arrived in Denver and was met at the station by George Paine Winters on October 6, 1910.

FC That's about fifty years ago. Then where did you meet Father? Where were you married?

MC On Thanksgiving Day at Laura Winters', he came in to show some pictures and to call, and I came down to the room with some ironing in my hand. Laura introduced us, and he asked me to go to the football game that afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Irwin accompanied us, and we had quite a fine

time at the football game. I was kind of lonesome for New York State and enjoyed the day very much being with these young people.

FC And then you had how many children, and who are they?

MC Fred Paine Clatworthy, Jr., born October 12...

FC Whoops! I think he was born August 29, 1912; Helen Margaret, March 2, 1915; and Barbara Louise, October 10, 1921. Three children as you say. Didn't you return from seeing one of these children just yesterday?

MC I came from Madison, Tennessee, to take an Eastern Airlines plane in Nashville and had a funny experience in getting into a helicopter to go to O'Hare Field in Chicago. I arrived in Denver forty-five minutes late. As the plane had not been announced, my son and daughter were there to meet me, but there I walked from the plane alone, thinking no one was there at the airfield. It was sort of hard to come in and think that no one was there to greet me.

FC Now, tell us about that family you saw down there in Madison, Tennessee.

MC Barbara Louise Gish; her husband, Bill Gish; and three children, Gay, Bill, and little Penny Gish.

FC What does your son-in-law do down in Tennessee?

MC He is production manager for the new Gates Rubber Company Plant in Madison, Tennessee.

FC Then, Helen lives here with you in the summertime, and both of you go to Palm Springs in the winter. I live, of course, in Anaheim, California, at the present time, in Orange County. Would you tell us of your first trip to Estes Park?

MC In the middle of July, 1911, Mr. Clatworthy had asked me to come to the Park to see the home which I was to occupy, or see the land on which the home was to be built. So I came by train to Loveland, Colorado, and he met me and took me to the W. D. Bassett home where a wonderful chicken dinner was arranged for us. We spent a very pleasant day. Then, later before we were to go home, Laura and George Winters and their two children who were along went with us as far as the entrance to Big Thompson Canyon. Having always lived in New York State where there are mountains as big as molehills, I was amazed to see the wonderful Big Thompson Canyon and to get my first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains in Estes Park. I came up the canyon just far enough to get this view, which was very wonderful to me. Then, I came back, and Mr. Clatworthy went with me as far as Berthoud. Our trip for the day was over.

FC In what kind of a conveyance did you travel?

MC Horse and buggy at that time. I don't think the steamers were in evidence. He had arranged this trip with a gentleman who drove us that day.

FC In other words, your first trip up here was in a horse and buggy, and

that was followed later by trips in Stanley Steamers. Is that right? What about those Stanley Steamers? As I recall, didn't you have to stop part way up for water?

MC The first trip we took Fred Jr. to the valley. He was very good as long as the machine was in motion, but when we stopped to put water into the Stanley Steamer, he set up a howl. He wanted to go on!

FC What condition were the roads in those days?

MC A single track, all the way up with turnoffs. When I came in the summertime to stay a week with Mrs. Clatworthy, Sr., and Linda, since they had three tenthouses on the place, I was amused by the little old lady who was along in the car. She would give a big squeal every time we would see another car coming because it would look as if we were both going to be blocked in the middle of the road! Our driver would back up to a turnoff, and everything was fine.

FC I see that in this house there are three bedrooms, a large front room, a bathroom, a kitchen, and two rooms downstairs. What did this house look like when you first arrived on the scene?

MC It was a large tenthouse, and the floor of the present room was an underpinning for the floor of the new house. When the walls were put up and measurements made, it was all "squeegie" and had to be done over again. Then, there were cots around the edge: one for Mother Clatworthy, one for Linda, and one for me. There were curtains around these cots. A cot was put up for Mr. Clatworthy in the dining-room or other tenthouse and was taken down in the daytime when we ate our meals up there and cooked there.

FC It certainly is a different-looking house now with native rock foundations and shingle sidings. You have told me that you moved into the house on April 17, 1912, and then I guess I arrived shortly after that on August 29 of the same year.

As we sit here and look out the window, I see a small pine tree. Right now, I'd say it's just roughly about three feet high. Does that pine tree in the cleft of the rock there have any special significance to you?

MC When they brought Fred out and put him on the cot in front of this bay window, this tree was ten inches high. At the time he yelled so loud that Dr. Wiest said it was the loudest of any cries of the five hundred children that he'd brought into the world!

FC I believe that the original area covered here by Father's property was about five acres, and I believe that with a large extension through purchasing property it went to about forty acres and extended up Little Prospect here about half a mile back of us and then out toward the Front Range about half a mile. As we look out the front window, we can see where there used to be a large pasture. I can remember the little pony that I had. First I had a donkey, and then a pony. Father constructed a barn there, and we had a little Scottish rig

in which people sat forward and backward. Do you remember that? At the present time, I believe there are about fifteen acres in the whole property.

MC Yes, I imagine so, at the present time.

FC Of course, I started out with a donkey and then had a pony, but before that, didn't you have a horse that you used to ride?

MC He gave me a little Indian pony which was kept in the lower part of the place in a fenced pasture. Every once in a while he'd have to chase it up over Little Prospect because it did not desire to stay down there.

FC Speaking of riding, I am reminded of riding with F.O. Stanley, who built the Stanley Hotel here in about 1909 or 1910. Father used to know Stanley as we did and used to ride with him in his Stanley Steamers once in a while. I can recall coming up the canyon many times and also up from Lyons on that road where you can still see large concrete reservoirs that were used to store water for the Stanley Steamers that would all have to stop there to take on additional water.

Then, too, they were very modern in those days. If you needed air in the tires, another hose went over the side, and you could pump air directly from the engine into the tires. Among these early day events I believe was the coming of one of the first airplanes to Estes Park. Could you tell us about that?

MC When Fred and Helen were about five and three years old, they were allowed to go to the top of Little Prospect to see the new airplane that had arrived. They didn't come back, and they didn't come back! They were to go no farther than the top of the hill. Pretty soon F. O. Stanley himself brought the two children around the front way. They'd decided not to obey their mother, but to go down and just look the proposition over themselves. Mr. Stanley delivered them home that time.

FC I think that you can remember, too, the time when some leaflets were dropped from the sky, and I happened to get a couple of these with lucky numbers on them which entitled us to free rides in the airplane. Aunt Linda and I went up in the Curtis Oriole airplane that was piloted by Eddie Brooks. As I remember, that was quite an event. The old airport was where the rodeo grounds is now, and it was quite uneven. When you came down, if you didn't hit one of the hills just right, you could bounce pretty badly.

Another one of the early day events here was the burning of the old English Hotel. Do you remember the date that it burned?

MC I received pictures of it burning on August 4, 1912. I was here in the middle of July; and Mrs. Lester, who later ran the Lesters' Hotel, and her husband had a house full of guests and full of their wedding things. One of the servants had been discharged; and this servant, who was to go along with his wife, put kerosene all up and down the

stairs just as they were about to step into the seven o'clock bus. The whole thing went up in flames.

FC This old English Hotel was constructed by Lord Dunraven, who was one of the early pioneers and owned most of the property in Estes Park. He had his own personal hunting lodge, and then this was where the regular guests stayed. Today you can go out there and still see foundation stones. They are all that is left of this large two-story wooden structure.

Another early-day event was the burning of the Lewiston Hotel, which was the most imposing structure of a hotel located on a large cliff above Estes Park. What do you remember about that fire?

MC One afternoon we were all terribly shocked to know that the Lewiston Hotel was on fire. Fred and his father each took film and started up there to take pictures while I stayed at the studio and sold film to other people. Out in front I could see the hotel gradually going, and tears came to my eyes. The fire seemed to start in the right hand side, and I thought if only the main body and the dining-room of the hotel could be shut off now and still survive! The Labor Day crowd had all gone, and the place was being closed for the season when the fire occurred.

FC Another fire was that of Long's Peak Inn. When the original structure burned, it was owned and operated by Enos Mills. Is there anything particular about that building?

MC The one thing that interested me was that I've heard my husband say that it was built entirely of old wood, not one bit of present lumber could be used in it.

FC You mean no live timber. They didn't want to cut down any live trees; they cut down just the dead ones.

Father for a long time had the distinction of operating one of the first retail businesses in Estes Park. The original building, I think, was used for a number of purposes. Could you give us some of those purposes?

MC I want to say that I've heard him tell of the time he took on developing and printing in a tent. He took a bucket to go over every night to bring water to develop and print these pictures to be delivered to the guests of Estes Park the next day. The building that was on the corner was Sunday School, church, and regular meeting place, built by John Cleave in the early days. I heard Mother Clatworthy tell how she played the organ; and Mrs. C. H. Bond, the wife of the pioneer in Estes Park, led the Sunday School. I believe Father Lamb preached all the services. I can just remember him. He had a long gray beard and was a very imposing man. We have pictures of the first Thanksgiving and all; in fact, all the get-togethers every year were held in this building. Everybody brought a covered dish, and I believe about twenty of the early pioneers are lettered and told. Among them are Mrs. R. H. Tallant; the people that ran the Steads Hotel, Mr. and Mrs. Stead; the Jameses; Ella Hondius; and Sister Lamb--a very interesting picture!

That building is still down there, isn't it? It's owned by Mr. Frumess, and it is called the Pioneer Gift Shop. This original store building and his business were started in 1905, and Father, of course, was in business then continuously for the next fifty years. These early businesses fulfilled a number of functions. Can you remember some of the functions that were carried on in this business?

MC There was the telephone exchange, and then he had charge of sending any laundry that came in down to the valley and distributing it when it arrived back in the Park. As well as athletic goods, he sold confectionary and had a ...

FC I believe he also had a soda fountain and the business acted as one end of the first stage line into Estes Park. Of course, you have already mentioned that it was the first telephone exchange at this end of the line.

Can you remember when some of the first hotels were being built around here? How about the Craggs Lodge, just above us here?

MC That must have been built when Fred, Jr., was about six months old or a year old. He was able to sit up in his go-cart. Mrs. Hondius came over one afternoon, and we decided that we'd go up to see how things were progressing. The waterline came down the very front of the building. Of course, they had to take the lumber and all up there on the road around the side. That was just too far for two women to push a baby buggy, but she and I took turns pushing him up the hill over to where they had put in the water.

FC It certainly looks very different now with the aerial tramway going by this hotel. Incidentally, this tramway--the lower terminus of which you can see out the window here and there--goes up to the top of Big Prospect. So what used to take several hours to scale can now be scaled in eight or ten minutes on this tramway.

Do you remember some of the early roads here? Remember the terrible dust we used to have on Main Street and how the two horses used to pull the big waterwagon up and down the street? Then, as they passed on up the street, the water squirted out the back of the large tank. After that, the dust was settled for about an hour or so, and then it would begin again.

Another event of those days was the first big snow that many of these people can remember. I believe that occurred in 1913, didn't it? Would you tell us about it?

MC Mr. Clatworthy and Sidney Foote were putting up hay for Texas people over in Mead, Colorado, and I had Fred, Jr. staying in the Nedley(?) Hotel in Ft. Collins when the big snow came. They phoned me at the hotel asking whether we had any snowshoes or anything in the house that would help them.

Mr. Clatworthy came back in February after the snow descended the fourth of December and stayed overnight in Lyons at the hotel there.

Then, he took a bobsled up to the top. At first we went in the Estes Park steamer stage up to Suicide Camp(?), and I can remember Howard James. We all had box lunches. It was the first time I had ever seen a man with silk stockings, but there he stood in the snow, eating his covered-dish dinner. We took a bobsled into the Park, and the roads were just being opened at that time in February. We stayed overnight at the National Park Hotel, and Bill Kerns shoveled a place from the river to the house so that we could get home the next day. Snow was just even with all the buildings there above on the road that led down to the bank. The snow was still deep there, and it was nine feet deep across the river from our little footbridge here.

FC How deep was it on the second of February when it snowed the worst? Do you recall what the depth was then?

MC About fourteen feet still. They had hardly gotten out all winter long! The fourth of December the days were so short that the snow had not melted until that time, and people were still struggling to get in whenever there was anyone on this side. At that time there were only the big log house down by the river and the C. H. Rockwell residence. We had our own home there, and that was all there was over here. No supermarkets--no buildings in the foreground at all, just the Crags Hotel that you could see above.

FC Although it seems that the snows were much deeper those days, I remember going to school a number of times and not being able to walk down the road, having to walk on the ice on the Thompson River between home here and school. During the big snow, I suppose for a number of weeks, the only communication with the outside world was on skis and then on bobsleds as she just said.

Do you recall anything about the original building of the Fall River Road? Of course, at the present time that has been superseded by the Trail Ridge Road, which for over ten or eleven miles is over 12,000 feet high, I believe. But do you recall the building of the original Fall River Road?

MC The convicts put the road in, and Bill Payne, Uncle Will, Linda Clatworthy and I took a walk up there. We went as far as we could in the car and then walked up to the top of the range. I felt very elated because I got to the top first. I would take fifty steps and stop and rest at that high altitude, and then fifty steps more. I tended right to my walking and got to the top first!

FC These convicts were housed in some log cabins, I believe, the remains of which were left for many years after.

Incidentally, speaking of high places, do you recall climbing Long's Peak? Tell us a little bit about Long's Peak.

MC The whole bunch, the Clatworthys and the Blocks, had a guide and started up. Fred, Jr. had sent his little horse up the day before, and the rest of us had horses for the day. We had a guide as I said, and we went up through the keyhole. Mr. Clatworthy stayed in back to take pictures of the crowd. Sue Block had eight year old Helen's and Fred, Jr.'s hands, and they went on ahead. I found myself alone. Well, I thought I'm not

going to let those youngsters get ahead of me, and I started to catch up with them. The first thing I knew I was on my back and had a hold on a rock on one side with a sheer drop of about 250 feet. I couldn't get up, and I couldn't get down. I didn't dare move, so I just yelled. The guide found me because Knut Block heard and called to the guide who picked me up. From then on I was quaking so and was so nervous that Mr. Clatworthy said, "Well, I've been up a number of times; let's not keep the rest of the crowd." I did make it through the Homestretch; and although it was just a little way beyond to the top, that was as far as I got in my escapade on Long's Peak! Helen made it much better than Fred did. He was about bushed; but when Helen came come, she had to climb up to where Grandma and Aunt Linda were and tell them about her trip. This was about 1923 because I left Barbara home with the maid to take care of her that day.

FC That was quite an undertaking. As you recall, we used to ride in the Model T car up to Long's Peak Inn. Then, we'd take horses from there up to the Boulderfield and then dismount to walk from there up to the top of Long's Peak. I believe, in fact, that Father was one of the first people to walk from Estes Park up to the top of Long's Peak and then back to Estes Park in one day. I don't know how many miles this involved. It must be a good thirty miles, I should think. You know those Model T Fords were quite the thing, and we had a great number of them. Could you give us a highlight or two of what happened with those old Model T Fords?

MC Mr. Clatworthy said the number of Fords we had went up all the time, but I was just sure of having three at one time. I said we had fourteen Fords! Well, in one of them we drove to Loveland when Fred was about a year and a half old to meet my mother who had come on the train from Laura Winters' home in Denver. We picked her up in Loveland, and Mama and I were on the back seat. Fred was on the front seat and leaned over to put his arms around his father. It wasn't very long before I said, "Dad, stop the car! The baby's in the sand!" But it didn't hurt him a bit. He just rolled over in the sand, and we picked him up and took him on up to the Park.

FC What do you plan to do this winter?

MC After Helen helps with the election returns-- we'll probably be packed up before that, we'll be off for the desert where I'll thoroughly enjoy the sunshine for my arthritic condition.

FC This will be about your fortieth winter there, won't it, in Palm Springs?

MC Off and on. I know we started there in 1921 and have been there practically every winter. I was three years in Riverside. Mr. Clatworthy would stay in the cabin, and I'd bring the children back and forth as they were in high school and junior college in Riverside, California.

FC Well, thank you very much for this interview high in the Rocky Mountains at Estes Park, Colorado, in the old original home.

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